

and lift up the poor. We had low unemployment, low inflation, and very high economic growth. And everybody thought it was going to go on forever. And within 2 years, we had over a half a million people in Vietnam, dividing the country. We had riots in our streets, making people believe that the civil rights issues could no longer be resolved in our legislative halls. We had an alienated citizenry.

And it has taken—I have waited—as an American, not as President, as an American—I have waited 35 years for my country to be back where it was, in terms of opportunity for us to work together, to respect our differences of opinion, to understand nobody's got a monopoly on truth, but to recognize that, my God, there's no place on Earth that's as blessed as we are.

And all that remains is whether we will be wise enough to make the most of it. I ask you to help us be that wise and to do your part.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:05 p.m. in the East Hall at Union Station. In his remarks, he referred to Indiana State Representative Paul Mannweiler, president, California State Senator Jim Costa, president-elect, New York State Senator Stephen Saland, vice president, North Carolina State Representative Dan Blue, immediate past president, Executive Clerk of the Florida House of Representatives John Phelps, staff chair, and William T. Pound, executive director, National Conference of State Legislatures; Matt Bennett, Special Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs; and Eric Lander, director, Whitehead/MIT Center for Genome Research. The President also referred to TANF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast *February 3, 2000*

Thank you, and good morning. Senator Mack, Senator Lieberman, Mr. Speaker, Congressman Doyle, other distinguished head table guests, and the Members of Congress and the Cabinet, my fellow Americans, and our visitors who have come from all across the world. Let me thank you again for this prayer breakfast and for giving Hillary and me the opportunity to come.

I ask that we remember in our prayers today a people who are particularly grieved, the men, women, and children who lost their loved ones on Alaska Airlines flight 261.

And let me say to all of you, I look forward to this day so much every year, a little time to get away from public service and politics into the realm of the spirit and to accept your prayers. This is a special year for me because, like Senator Mack, I'm not coming back, at least in my present position. And I have given a lot of thought to what I might say today, much of it voiced by my friend of 30 years now, Senator Joe Lieberman, who did a wonderful job for all of us.

The question I would hope that all of my fellow citizens would ask themselves today is: What responsibilities are now imposed on us

because we live at perhaps the greatest moment of prosperity and promise in the history of our Nation, at a time when the world is growing ever more interdependent? What special responsibilities do we have?

Joe talked about some of them. We—I sometimes think in my wry way, when Senator Mack referred to his cousin, Judge Arnold, a longtime friend of Hillary's and mine, as being on his far right and that making it uncomfortable, I laughed to myself. That's why Connie wanted him on the bench, so he would get one more Democrat out of the public debate. *[Laughter]* But I wonder how long we'll be all right after this prayer breakfast. I wonder if we'll make it 15 minutes or 30 or an hour. Maybe we'll make it 48 hours before we'll just be back to normal.

So I want to ask you to think about that today: What is underneath the fundamental points that Senator Lieberman made today? For us Christians, Jesus said, the two most important Commandments of all were to love the Lord with all our heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves. The Torah says that anyone who turns aside the stranger acts as if he turns aside

the most high God. The Koran contains its own powerful version of the Golden Rule, telling us never to do unto others what we would not like done to ourselves.

So what I would like to ask you in this, my last opportunity to be the President at this wonderful prayer breakfast: Who are our neighbors, and what does it mean to love them?

His Holiness John Paul II wrote us a letter about how he answered that question, and we are grateful for that.

For me, we must start with the fact that “neighbors” means something different today in common language than it did when I was a boy. It really means something different in common language than it did when I became President, when there were 50 websites on the World Wide Web. Today, there are over 50 million, in only 7 years. So that we see that within our borders we are not only growing more diverse every day in terms of race and ethnic groups and religion, but we can talk to people all across the world in an instant, in ever more interesting ways that go far beyond business and commerce and politics.

I have a cousin who is from the same little town in Arkansas I am, who plays chess a couple of times a week with a man in Australia, 8,000 miles away. The world is growing smaller and more interdependent. And I guess the point I would like to make to you today is, as time and space contract, the wisdom of the human heart must expand. We must be able to love our neighbors and accept our essential oneness.

Now, globalization is forcing us to that conclusion, so is science. I’ve had many opportunities to say in the last few months that the most enlightening evening I had last year was one that Hillary sponsored at the White House where a distinguished scientist and expert in human genome research informed us that we are all genetically 99.9 percent the same and, furthermore, said that the differences among people in the same racial group genetically are different, are greater—the individual differences among people in the same racial and ethnic groups are greater than the differences from group to group.

For some that is reassuring; for some that is disturbing. When I said that in the State of the Union, the Republicans and Democrats both laughed uncomfortably. [Laughter] It seemed inconceivable. But the truth is that modern science has taught us what we always

learned from ancient faiths, the most important fact of life on this Earth is our common humanity. Our faith—I love what Representative Doyle said—our faith is the conviction of things unseen. But more and more, our faith is confirmed by what we know and see.

So, with all the blessings we now enjoy, what shall we do with it? If we say, “Okay, we accept it, God, even though we don’t like it every day, we are one with our brothers and sisters, whether we like them or not all the time. We have to be bigger. Our hearts have to grow deeper. Time and space contract; help us to expand our spirits,” what does that mean?

We know we can’t build our own future without helping others to build theirs. But many of us live on the cutting edge of a new economy, while over a billion people live on the bare edge of survival. And here in our own country, there are still too many poor children and too many communities that have not participated in our prosperity.

The Christian Bible says that Jesus warned us that even as we do it unto the least of these, we have done it unto our God. When times are tough and all of our fellow citizens are having a hard time pulling together, we can be forgiven if we look at the welfare of the whole. Now the welfare of the whole is the strongest it has ever been, but people within our country and beyond our borders are still in trouble, people with good values, people with the values you have held up here today, people who would gladly work. We dare not turn away from them if we believe in our common humanity.

We see all over the world the chorus of denial about our common responsibility for the welfare of this planet, even though all the scientists say that it is changing and warming at an unsustainable rate, and all great faiths have reminded us of our solemn obligation to our earthly home.

Even more troubling to me, our dazzling modern world is witness to a resurgence of society’s oldest demon, the inability to love our closest neighbors as ourselves if they look or worship differently from the rest of us. Today, the Irish peace process is strained by a lack of trust between Republican Catholics and Protestant Unionists. In the Middle East, with all its hope, we are still having to work very hard to overcome the profoundest of suspicions between Israeli Jews and Palestinian and Syrian Arabs.

We have people here today from the Indian subcontinent, perhaps the most dangerous place in the world today because of the tensions over Kashmir and the possession of nuclear weapons. And yet, when people from the Indian subcontinent come to America, they do better than nearly anybody because of their family values, their work ethics, and their remarkable capacity, innate capacity, for absorbing all the lessons of modern science and technology.

In Bosnia and Kosovo, Christians thought they were being patriotic to cleanse their lands of Muslims. In other places, Islamic terrorists claim their faith commands them to kill infidels, though the Koran teaches that God created nations and tribes that we might know one another, not that we might despise one another.

Here at home, we still see Asians, blacks, gays, even in one instance last year, children at a Jewish school, subject to attacks just because of who they are. And here in Washington, we are not blameless, for we often, too, forget in the heat of political battle our common humanity. We slip from honest difference, which is healthy, into dishonest demonization. We ignore, when we're all hyped and in a fight, all those Biblical admonitions we profess to believe: that "we all see through a glass darkly"; that, with Saint Paul, we all do what we would not, and we do not do what we would; that "faith, hope, and charity abide, but the greatest of these is charity"; that God says to all of us, not just some, "I have redeemed you. I have

called you by your name. You are Mine," all of you.

Once Abraham Lincoln responded to some friends of his who were complaining really bitterly about politicians who would not support him. And he said to them, and I quote, "You have more of a feeling of personal resentment than I have. Perhaps I have too little of it. But I never thought it paid." Well, we know it doesn't pay. And the truth is, we're all here today because, in God's timetable, we're all just like Senator Mack and me. We're all term-limited.

In my lifetime, our Nation has never had the chance we now have to build the future of our dreams for our children, to be good neighbors to the rest of the world, to live out the admonition of all our faiths. To do it, we will have to first conquer our own demons and embrace our common humanity with humility and gratitude.

I leave you with the words of a great prayer by Chief Seattle. "This we know: All things are connected. We did not weave the web of life. We are merely a strand in it. And whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 a.m. in the International Ballroom at the Hilton Washington Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Judge Richard S. Arnold, U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit, Little Rock, AR.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of Alan Greenspan as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board

February 3, 2000

I am pleased that the Senate has confirmed the nomination of Alan Greenspan for another term as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. Chairman Greenspan's wise and steady leadership has inspired confidence here in America and around the world. He has made a truly remarkable contribution in helping lead our Nation to the longest economic expansion in his-

tory. I look forward to continuing the productive and appropriate relationship that my administration has enjoyed with Chairman Greenspan and the other excellent members of the Federal Reserve Board in working to extend this era of American prosperity. I am hopeful that the Senate will move quickly to confirm the other two nominees to the Federal Reserve Board as well.